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Mexican Snakes of the Genus *Typhlops*

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ABSTRACT: There are three well-known representatives of the genus *Typhlops* in Mexico. All are known from definite localities; all are known from more than a single specimen; and all have been found by at least two different collectors. These are *Typhlops basimaculatus* Cope; *T. braminus* Daudin, and *T. microstomus* Cope. A fourth species, *Typhlops psittacus* Werner, described from a single specimen, the collector unknown (or at least not stated), and with no more definite locality data than "Mexico," belongs to a section of the genus having a sharp transverse edge on the snout, a section of the genus hitherto unknown from the western hemisphere. In consequence one is rather prone to question the label.

Typhlops basimaculatus Cope

Typhlops basimaculatus Cope, Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Philadelphia, 1866, p. 320. Type locality, "Cordova and Orizaba" Veracruz.

Cope described this form briefly from a specimen or specimens sent from Mexico by Sumichrast. Three years later Peters described a form *Typhlops perditus*. (Monatsb. Akad. Wiss. Berlin, 1869, pp. 430-436. Type locality, Orizaba.) Since he compares the form with *Typhlops reticulatus* I suspect that he had not seen Cope's description from which his own does not differ in any significant character. At a much later date F. Müller described a form which he designated *Typhlops (praelongus* n. sp.?) (*sic*) from Córdoba. He compares it with Peters' *perditus*, stating that it "steht dem *T. perditus* Peters sehr nahe, und unterscheidet sich von ihm wesentlich nur durch jede Abwesenheit einer Spur von Auge." Boulenger (Catalogue of the Snakes in the British Museum, 2d Ed. I, 1893, p. 28, and Günther (Biologia Centrali Americana, Batrachia and Reptilia, April 1893, p. 86) refers the three above species to *Typhlops tenuis* Salvin (Proc. Zoöl. Soc. London, 1860, p. 454. Type

locality Coban, Guatemala). This latter species is described by Salvin as having 17 scale rows and no mention is made of the yellow head and yellow tail tip.

Bocourt (Mission Scientifique au Mexique; Etudes sur les Reptiles, Livr. 8, 1882, p. 499) describes and figures a form from Guatemala* which he identifies as *Typhlops perditus* Peters and which is figured as having a well-developed eye.

Thus we have a yellow-headed form in Guatemala having similar body proportions to the form described by Salvin; 18 scale rows are present about the body, as is likewise true of *perditus*, *basimaculatus* and *praelongis*.

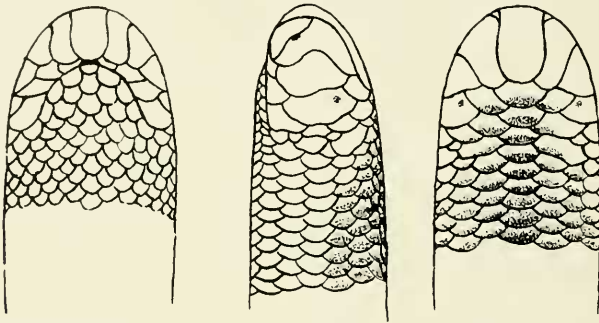


FIG. 1. *Typhlops basimaculatus* Cope. EHT-HMS, No. 5499; Potrero Viejo, Veracruz, Mexico. $\times 5$.

While the above facts point to a possibility of a close relationship to *Typhlops tenuis* I doubt the matter is settled beyond question. In consequence I am maintaining Cope's name, knowing that it is certainly applicable to this form, and trusting that the future will offer an opportunity for the examination of the type of *T. tenuis*.

A specimen in the EHT-HMS collection No. 5499, presented to me by Mr. Dyfrig McH. Forbes, was collected at Potrero Viejo some ten miles east of Córdoba, Veracruz. It presents the following characters: Head much flattened, the thickness at anterior edge of mouth only one-half the width of head; the greatest depth of head is three-fourths the width of head; nasal completely divided, the suture arising from the first labial; four upper labials; posterior nasals not in contact behind the rostral; latter rather tongueshaped, about a fourth wider, on upper surface, than on ventral surface, not reaching posteriorly to the level of the eye; preocular large, distinctly wider than the ocular, and of slightly greater area; ocular

* He states "Mexique, Guatemala" for the source of the specimen figured; measurements from a Guatemala specimen are given.

somewhat longer vertically than the preocular; no subocular; scales following rostral a little larger than body scales; supraoculars about same size as the scale following rostral; two elongated parietal scales on each side (the anterior broken on the left side); anterior parietal separated from the last (fourth) labial by two scales, which, with the parietal and labial form the posterior border of the ocular; mental very small; three lower labials; eye represented by a small pigmented area. Scales in 18 rows throughout body. The nine ventral rows are immaculate; the dorsal rows are spotted, each spot covering (usually) parts of four scales; the yellowish reticulation between the spots not confined to the scale edges; dorsal part of snout, and sides of head to behind ocular, immaculate yellow-white; scales from rostral to tip of tail, 391; ten scales under tail.

Total length, 248 mm.; diameter of body, 4 mm.; width of head, 4 mm.; depth of head in front of mouth, 2 mm.; at eyes, 3.2 mm.; diameter of body in total length, 62.

I have compared this specimen with the type (U. S. N. M. 6602. Córdova, and Orizaba, Veracruz, F. Sumichrast), and find no significant differences. The type is more robust. The head examined under a strong lens shows scarcely a trace of the eye; the snout is a very blunt oval, nearly truncate. There are actually three lower labials. Color faded, but the pigment pattern on head is very similar to the described specimen; eight dorsal scales pigmented; remaining ten rows whitish; 385 scales, mouth to anus; 9 scales under tail; total length (about) 330 mm.; tail, 42 mm.; head width, 4.8 mm.; greatest body width, 6 mm.

Typhlops microstomus Cope

Typhlops microstomus Cope, Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Philadelphia, 1866, p. 125. Type locality, Yucatán, Mexico.

This species is widely separated from other described species in America by the following combination of characters: eighteen scale rows; one preocular; *one subocular separating the ocular from labial*; eye, on ocular-preocular suture, scarcely visible; lower jaw narrowed at tip; snout rounded, not hooked. "Color yellowish-olive, becoming brighter yellow posteriorly." Specimens, other than the type, are known.

Typhlops psittacus Werner

Typhlops psittacus Werner, Zool. Anz. XXVI, No. 693, Feb. 9, 1903, p. 248. Type locality, "Mexico."

This form is distinguishable from other Mexican forms in having a *hooked snout* with sharp side margins; the nostril on the under-

side of snout, a subocular present. The description gives 24 as the number of scale rows, while the key included in the description gives 20 rows for the species. So far as I can learn this species is known only from the type. As all forms known having a sharp snout are old world forms, one might be tempted to question the "Mexico" locality label.

Typhlops braminus (Daudin)

Eryx braminus Daudin, Histoire Naturelle Générale et Particulière des Reptiles, vol. VII (year XI) 1803, pp. 279-280.

Specimens of this species have been taken in southern Guerrero, in the general region near Acapulco. It is likely that it was imported from the Philippines. *Peropus mutilatus* and *Hemidactylus frenatus*, two other Philippine reptiles, have reached the west coast of Mexico.

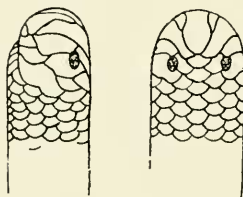


FIG. 2. *Typhlops braminus* Daudin. EHT-HMS, No. 5251; two miles south Garrapatas, Guerrero, Mexico, June 27, 1932. $\times 5$.

The EHT-HMS collection contains the following specimens of the species: No. 5251, two miles south Garrapatas, Guerrero; elevation, 550 m.; collected by Hobart M. Smith, June 27, 1932. No. 15917, Agua del Obispo, Guerrero, June 25, 1938; No. 15918, at km. 388 near Xaltinanguis, Guerrero; Nos. 15919-15933, El Limoncito, Guerrero, about 15 km. north of Acapulco, all collected by E. H. Taylor.

All of the localities listed are less than fifty miles from Acapulco which, I suspect, was the port of entry of the species into Mexico.* The extent that it has spread suggests that the importation is not particularly recent, but probably dates to the time when the Spanish galleons carried trade between Acapulco and the Philippines.

* Since the above was written, notice of the discovery of this species in Mexico has appeared in *Herpetología*, 1, No. 5, p. 44. The locality, Chilpancingo, is approximately 80 miles from the coast.